

# Future Reserves 2020, the British Army and the Politics of Military Innovation during the Cameron Era

## Introduction

In July 2013, Prime Minister David Cameron's government introduced its new *Future Reserves 2020: Valuable and Valued* (FR2020) policy, which aimed to increase the capability and deployability of Britain's reserve forces.<sup>1</sup> Although FR2020 was a defence-wide policy that addressed all three services' reserve forces, most of the policy focused on transforming the Territorial Army (TA), which was to receive £1.2 billion investment [of the initial £1.5 billion allocated to implement FR2020 across the three services] to expand, train and equip the organisation so that it could deploy alongside the Regular Army. The policy represented the most radical attempt to transform the TA since its inception in 1907, aiming to change it from a strategic reserve to a routinely deployable operational force. The complimentary Army2020 policy sought to integrate the Reserves and Regulars within a single, tiered rotational force structure. FR2020 put the previously marginal TA at the core of British defence during Cameron's tenure, ensuring it received heavy political and media attention. Despite its importance to British defence policy, the origins and effects of FR2020 have been understudied.

This article examines why and how the recent attempt to transform the TA was undertaken, and analyses its outcome. It details how the key drivers for restructuring the TA were intensely political, ideological and financial. Challenging Edmunds et al.'s view that 'the most important long-term driver for change [in the Reserves was] strategic in nature', it argues that these rationales underpinning FR2020's origins – and the Army's resistance to them – are crucial to understanding the policy's evolution and impact.<sup>2</sup> Our

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<sup>1</sup> Ministry of Defence, *Reserves in the Future Force 2020: Valuable and Valued* (London: HMSO, 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Tim Edmunds et al. 'Reserve Forces and the Transformation of British Military Organisation: Soldiers, Citizens and Society,' *Defence Studies*, 16:2 (2016), p. 120.

analysis reveals how these ideological and financial dynamics resulted in an ad hoc defence policy and subsequent intra-service and civil-military frictions, providing further evidence of incoherent defence policy-making during Cameron's tenure. Thus, we make three important contributions to the military innovation literature, whilst increasing understanding of reserve forces amongst international security scholars.

First, we provide original data on a recent attempt at peacetime reserve force innovation: themes understudied in the military innovation literature. Specifically, the literature identifying intra-service rivalry as the driver of innovation has previously focused on competition between different arms. However, our case provides a compelling example of intra-service rivalry between components rather than arms, and over personnel and organisational structures rather than technology and visions of victory.

Second, we explore how Cameron's domestic, intra-party ideological and financial motivations led his government to pressure the Army to execute organisational reforms in order to address primarily domestic, rather than external, factors. This analysis also exposes how the Army's leadership was able, towards the end of Cameron's tenure, to extricate itself from these innovation efforts in order to maintain its pre-eminence vis-à-vis the TA. We show how the Army's leadership reasserted its primacy once the political will for implementing FR2020 diminished. We show that several processes identified in the innovation literature were simultaneously operant highlighting the inherent organisational realities of reserve service that can limit innovation efforts. Finally, addressing the broader lack of sociological theory in military innovation studies, we employ industrial sociology to show how FR2020 followed post-Fordist principles to meet these political, ideological and financial demands. Taken together, this article contributes a major new case study to the literature on peacetime innovation, and the

impact of intra-party and intra-service politics upon it, within the wider context of a post-Fordist understanding of the reorganisation of military forces.

Our evidence is drawn from an ESRC-funded, Army-sponsored research project conducted between 2012 and 2016 that examined FR2020's origins, evolution and impact. The research was mixed methods, utilising elite interviews with senior policy makers to understand FR2020's origins and evolution, and interviews, surveys and field observations of units to understand its impact. The data presented here draws on 16 elite interviews from the across the Army, the Reserves, government, and former ministers, and supporting doctrinal and primary and secondary source analysis. To mitigate any evidential risks from these sources, interview, primary and secondary source data has been triangulated to ensure validity.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Politics of Military Innovation**

Here we overview the military innovation literature to establish a conceptual framework to investigate FR2020. This literature can be divided into two main schools of thought. The top-down approach focuses on the importance of doctrine, civil-military relations and inter- and intra-service politics as drivers of innovation.<sup>4</sup> However, more recently several scholars have argued that militaries can also transform in response to bottom-up – or tactical – pressures.<sup>5</sup> Farrell later defined these processes as ‘top-down innovation’

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Atkinson and Sara Delamont (eds.), *Sage Qualitative Research Methods* (London: SAGE, 2011), pp. 59-72.

<sup>4</sup> Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (New York: Cornell UP, 1984); Deborah Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change* (New York: Cornell UP, 1994); Stephen Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (New York: Cornell UP, 1991); Kimberley Zisk, *Engaging the Enemy: Organization Theory and Soviet Military Innovation, 1955–1991* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1993).

<sup>5</sup> Eliot Cohen, ‘Change and Transformation in Military Affairs’, *Journal of Strategic Studies* 27:3 (2004), pp. 395-407; Adam Grissom, ‘The Future of Military Innovation Studies’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 29:5 (2006), pp. 905-934; James Russell, *Innovation, Transformation, and War* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2010).

and ‘bottom-up adaptation’.<sup>6</sup> Foley, Griffin and McCartney have argued that innovation and adaptation are largely dependent on each other if transformation is to last.<sup>7</sup>

We argue that FR2020 is best understood as an innovation attempt. Such an argument is historically coherent with previous attempts to transform Britain’s reserve forces as these have been top-down. Avant and Lebovic show that there are two major ways for explaining top-down innovation.<sup>8</sup> The first analyses change in response to the external environment, which can occur by variation in the perception of security threats or as a consequence of political direction. Primarily associated with Posen, Avant and Zisk this approach focuses on the civil-military relations interface, and argues that innovation usually occurs during peacetime.<sup>9</sup> However, organisational changes can be difficult to achieve in peacetime. Avant, and Halperin and Clapp contend that organisational leaders will resist change that threatens their understanding of what capabilities and tasks are appropriate for the organisation.<sup>10</sup> Military leaders deem that they are better than others at establishing what capabilities they should have and how they should accomplish their mission. Hence, ‘they want to spend the money allocated to them as they choose, to [deploy] their [personnel] as they choose, and to implement policy in their own fashion’.<sup>11</sup> Zisk has shown that militaries may do this when reforms threaten their budgetary and resource allocation. Nevertheless, military chiefs can neither apportion their own resources, nor completely set their own objectives. ‘Control over

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<sup>6</sup> Theo Farrell, ‘Improving in War: Military Adaptation and the British in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 2006-2009’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 33:4 (2010), p. 570.

<sup>7</sup> Rob Foley, Stuart Griffin and Helen McCartney, “Transformation in Contact”: learning the lessons of modern war’, *International Affairs*, 87:2 (2011), p. 253.

<sup>8</sup> Deborah Avant and James Lebovic, ‘U.S. Military Responses to Post-Cold War Missions’, in Theo Farrell and Terry Terriff (eds.) *The Sources of Military Change: Culture, Politics, Technology* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 139-160.

<sup>9</sup> Deborah Avant ‘The Institutional Sources of Military Doctrine: Hegemons in Peripheral Wars’, *International Studies Quarterly*, 37:4 (1993), pp. 412-13

<sup>10</sup> Morton Halperin and Priscilla Clapp, *Bureaucratic Politics and Foreign Policy* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1978), pp. 28.

<sup>11</sup> Zisk (1993), p. 14.

revenues and [organisational] goals is all vested ... in entities external to the organization – legislatures ... politicians and interest groups’.<sup>12</sup> Thus, for a military to implement change, it necessitates political support which, according to Zisk, is the product of complex negotiations and alliance-building efforts within the “defence policy community” involving those pushing for innovation within the organisation – often military mavericks – and those that have the defence expertise or bureaucratic and political power that facilitate such innovation attempts.<sup>13</sup>

Given the difficulty with which militaries innovate of their own accord, Posen argues that civilian leaders must compel military leaders to implement their desired changes. Thus, civilian leaders identify, promote and support those ‘mavericks’ in military organisations who agree with their vision.<sup>14</sup> Overall, this literature is important because it shows how external political pressure and the nature of civil-military relations can drive innovation. However, it has primarily focused on external or budgetary pressures. With the exception of Zisk, less attention has been paid to how intra-party political pressures and political ideology have provided the external impetus for innovation.

The second approach examines internally produced change. Avant and Lebovic’s inter-service model studies the relationships between the state’s military services, while Farrell and Terriff’s innovation model posits that organisational culture influences the form and likelihood of transformation; an argument Kier has also advanced.<sup>15</sup> While these have some relevance, most useful for this study is Rosen’s intra-service model, which

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<sup>12</sup> James Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), p. 115.

<sup>13</sup> Zisk (1993), pp.4-5.

<sup>14</sup> Posen (1984), p. 54.

<sup>15</sup> Theo Farrell, ‘Culture and Military Power’, *Review of International Studies* 24:3 (1998), pp. 407-416; Elizabeth Kier, *Imagining War: French and British Military Doctrine between the Wars* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1997); Farrell and Terriff (2002).

contests the inter-service conceptualisation of the services as monolithic actors and concentrates on competition between combat arms within the same service. In doing so, Rosen challenges Posen's argument that 'military mavericks' work together with civilian policy-makers to enable innovation.<sup>16</sup> Instead, militaries are understood as political communities, whereby each service is comprised of sub-organisations that aim to pursue 'their own organizational self-interests'.<sup>17</sup> Supporters of the innovation operate within the service to find allies to implement the new vision by overcoming other organisational interest groups. Thus, innovation is the product of ideological clashes within the service between emerging reformers and the guardians of longstanding processes. It occurs when new conceptualisations of victory and/or war are endorsed and bolstered as visionary senior personnel work together with more junior officers to implement organisational change.<sup>18</sup> This may occur when new leaders with different conceptions of how to address their environment get appointed and make such ideas dominant, often through incentives like promotions. Crucially, Rosen focuses on competing arms; different combat functions and their respective emerging technologies. We, however, focus on the rivalry between the core Regular Army and its peripheral reserve force. As we show, intra-service competition most accurately explains the Army's resistance to, and ultimate trajectory of, FR2020, within the context of an externally-imposed innovation. Thus, our case shows how both external political pressures and intra-service dynamics simultaneously shaped FR2020.

However, countering Rosen, Zisk argues that innovation is a more complex process of alliance-building among interest groups within organisations and within the wider defence policy community. She argues that in the face of resistance 'such groups

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<sup>16</sup> Posen (1984), pp. 174-175.

<sup>17</sup> Rosen (1991), p.19.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen Rosen, 'New Ways of War: Understanding Military Innovation', *International Security* 13:1 (1988), pp. 134-168.

... extend their networks into the policy environment to build coalitions in support of their interests'.<sup>19</sup> This article empirically explores in detail how such alliance-building processes occurred in relation to the transformation efforts of the British Army Reserves. We, in fact, explore how senior TA officers, as the non-dominant ('maverick') interest group vis-à-vis the Army in terms of internal political clout, resourcing and numbers, coalesced with key political figures to initiate an innovation programme that attempted to position the once peripheral TA at the core of the Army's force structure.

### **Political Ideology and Post-Fordism**

Recently, Griffin has critiqued the innovation literature. While lauding the discipline for its open, multidisciplinary approach, he argues that it lacks the sustained application of wider organisational and sociological theory.<sup>20</sup> This article addresses this lacuna by incorporating a post-Fordist conceptual framework to understand FR2020 transformation. Despite this article's emphasis on FR2020's intra-party origins and subsequent intra-service dynamics, these must be situated within the wider context of British politics and the 2007-8 global financial crisis. The latter's impact on the British economy provided the 2010 Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition government the opportunity to pursue a 'neoliberal and market-led growth model and ... hold firmly to the belief that reducing the public deficit would spark a private sector recovery'.<sup>21</sup> Such views had dominated British politics since the early 1980s with the end of the post-war consensus, the rise of market liberalisation, the privatisation of state services, and reduced state spending under the Conservatives. This ideological blueprint for reorganising state services was supported by developments in industrial organisation, especially the end of the Fordist

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<sup>19</sup> Zisk (1993), p.126

<sup>20</sup> Stuart Griffin, 'Military Innovation Studies: Multidisciplinary or Lacking Discipline?', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 40:1-2 (2017), pp. 196-224

<sup>21</sup> David Clark, *The Global Financial Crisis and Austerity: A Basic Introduction* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2016), p. 76.

mode of production that relied on mass labour forces ‘employed on long term contracts, producing standardised products for stable markets’, which began to be undermined in the 1970s by rising production costs and competition.<sup>22</sup>

Drawing on industrial sociology, King notes how, driven by the pressures of decreasing military budgets and increasingly diverse missions, Western militaries have adopted post-Fordist principles to deliver better efficiencies. He applies the four tenets of post-Fordism to the military environment: 1) the replacement of mass labour with a highly skilled core (professional and special forces) and less-skilled periphery (reserve forces); 2) the outsourcing of non-core functions to reduce overheads; 3) the centralisation of headquarters and the flattening of hierarchies; and 4) the development of a network approach to supply, knowledge and organisational structure (e.g., the dispersal and co-ordination of forces centred around independent brigades). It is noteworthy here, thus supporting the growing emphasis on centralisation, that Farrell et al. have shown how recent British defence policy has also been shaped by a joint approach – emphasising the better integration of the three services – to deliver efficiencies.<sup>23</sup> Yet, FR2020’s emphasis on transformation has focused on the augmentation and closer integration of the Reserves within the Regulars within each single service rather than on their joint integration.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, a disproportionate effort in augmenting reserve forces has focused on the Army compared to the Royal Air Force and Maritime Reserves essentially to make up for the significant cuts to the Army’s Regular personnel numbers<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Author (forthcoming); Christopher Dandeker, ‘National Security and Democracy: The United Kingdom Experience’, *Armed Forces & Society*, 20:3 (1994), pp. 353-374.

<sup>23</sup> Theo Farrell, Sten Rynning, and Terry Terriff, *Transforming Military Power Since the Cold War: Britain, France and the United States, 1991-2012* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

<sup>24</sup> The joint integration of reserve cyber capabilities has been a notable exception. See: Ministry of Defence, *Reserves in the Future Force 2020*.

<sup>25</sup> The Army Reserve trained strength was to rise to 30,000, whilst the Royal Auxiliary Air Force and Maritime Reserves would rise to 1,800 and 3,100 trained personnel, respectively. *Reserves in the Future Force 2020* (2013), p.11.



Overall, King argues that modern Western militaries have transformed in a fashion analogous with post-Fordist industry due to similar financial and ‘supply and demand-side pressures’.<sup>26</sup> He argues that faced with these pressures, Western militaries have emulated industry in a process similar to the ‘institutional mimetic isomorphism’ first coined by DiMaggio and Powell.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, others have emphasised the role of neo-liberal ideology and business consultancy firms in promoting post-Fordist approaches to British military organisation.<sup>28</sup> Adopting this ideology, the new Conservative-led coalition government pursued a politics of austerity bent on reducing the UK’s financial debt through extensive public sector cuts.<sup>29</sup>

This supports Zisk’s argument that military reforms do not always have threat-based, external origins; politicians have their own domestic reasons for demanding reforms and ‘often, these reasons are [centred] on cost-cutting efforts’.<sup>30</sup> As Farrell and Terriff have argued, ‘the process whereby strategic developments shape military change is shaped by politics within the state and within the organisation itself’.<sup>31</sup> Our analysis focuses on this wider context of political ideology and financial austerity: we examine the political debates and manoeuvring that occurred both within the British political establishment and the Army before, during and after the Cameron government’s decision to transform the TA. In doing so, we highlight how a post-Fordist approach was adopted to meet these ideological demands, thereby placing these innovation efforts within a wider social context.

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<sup>26</sup> Anthony King, ‘The Post-Fordist Military’, *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 34:2 (2006), 368.

<sup>27</sup> Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, ‘The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional isomorphism and collective rationality in organisational fields,’ *American Sociological Review*, 48 (1983), pp. 147-160.

<sup>28</sup> Author (forthcoming); Christopher Dandeker, ‘National Security and Democracy: The United Kingdom Experience’, *Armed Forces & Society*, 20:3 (1994), pp. 353-374.

<sup>29</sup> Simon Griffiths, “No Plan B: The Coalition Agenda for Cutting the Deficit and Rebalancing the Economy” in Simon Lee and Matt Beech (eds.) *The Cameron–Clegg Government Coalition Politics in an Age of Austerity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 75-88.

<sup>30</sup> Zisk (1993) p. 14.

<sup>31</sup> Farrell and Terriff (2002), p.16.

## **The Context of FR2020**

Cornish and Dorman have examined how the tight financial constraints of the 2010 Spending Review shaped that year's National Security Strategy (NSS) and the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). Together, these started the British military's transformation just as it began to return from over a decade of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. They show how the economic climate in which the reviews were conducted dictated that financial security was the foundation upon which the SDSR rested. They question this contention given the ability of nations to access international lending facilities; in reality the SDSR was 'politics-led' and a product of the Conservatives' ideological views on the economy.<sup>32</sup> Senior officers required to implement subsequent defence cuts have stated that despite the austerity rhetoric, these cuts were ultimately 'a political choice'.<sup>33</sup> As both the NSS and SDSR were undertaken simultaneously with the 2010 Spending Review, and completed in only five months, some labelled the SDSR 'a treasury-led defence review', indicating the rushed and ad hoc nature of policy formulation at the time.<sup>34</sup> The evidence presented below further supports this. Yet, this politico-ideological context for FR2020 was also influenced by intra-party and intra-service dynamics.

## **Background to FR2020**

While the TA's recent history can be traced back to the 1860s, analysis of the three major periods of reserve transformation reveals that Britain's reserve army has proved difficult to reform historically and failed to provide an effective system for deployment overseas

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<sup>32</sup> Paul Cornish and Andrew Dorman, 'Dr. Fox and the Philosopher's Stone: the alchemy of national defence in the age of austerity', *International Affairs*, 87:2 (2011), p. 346.

<sup>33</sup> Interviews: Major General Kevin Abraham, 14 January 2015, and Major General Dickie Davis, 27 February 2015. Henceforth Davis.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Cornish and Andrew Dorman, 'Fifty shades of purple? A risk-sharing approach to the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review' *International Affairs*, 89:5 (2013) pp. 1183.

outside wars of national survival.<sup>35</sup> The TA and its predecessors have been a strategic, rather than operational, reserve. The current transformation's origins begin with the 1990 *Options for Change* defence review that reduced the TA's establishment from 76,000 to 63,500. This reduction created structural problems within the TA and failed to define its role. The lack of a collective role meant that the 'system of individual backfills was introduced which would last for the next 20 years'.<sup>36</sup> Meanwhile, the increased operational tempo experienced under Prime Minister Blair highlighted inadequacies in the quality of TA training, while underinvestment left it short of essential kit. Coroners' reports investigating TA soldier deaths in Iraq highlighted these failures. Their conclusions reiterated the legal requirement that reservists were as well trained and equipped as possible,<sup>37</sup> and concerning TA future deployments, this meant that the 'legal implications were huge'.<sup>38</sup> These TA shortcomings provided some impetus for the Army to begin addressing them in 2004.

Yet, these issues were a low priority with both components committed in Iraq and Afghanistan. By 2005, the TA was at its lowest strength since its establishment. Consequently, in late 2008 Chief of the General Staff (CGS) Richard Dannatt, ordered the Army to conduct a full-scale review. This proposed three options to reduce the TA's strength to between 24,000 and 8,000.<sup>39</sup> This was an internal Army review; it was part of the wider debate within British defence about the forthcoming SDSR. Thus, according to another former CGS, when it became clear that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) was considering alternate plans – 'all work stopped on the Army's reserve plan in 2009... as an organisation [the TA] was in stasis'.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> For a history of the TA/Reserves, see: Ian F. Beckett, *Territorials: A Century of Service* (Plymouth: DRA Publishing, 2008); Author (forthcoming).

<sup>36</sup> Interview, Davis.

<sup>37</sup> 'New inquest sought for TA soldier', *BBC News*, (30 January 2007).

<sup>38</sup> Interview, General Sir Peter Wall, 14 January 2015. Henceforth, Wall.

<sup>39</sup> 'Territorial Army faces deep cuts', *The Daily Telegraph* (28 September 2008)

<sup>40</sup> Interview, Wall.

By October 2009, with the newly appointed CGS David Richards, and with the impact of the 2008 financial crisis reverberating, the MoD temporarily suspended TA training in order to save £20 million.<sup>41</sup> Meanwhile, senior TA officers were increasingly worried that the Army intended to drastically shrink their organisation. They viewed the halting of TA training as evidence that the Army's leadership was willing to let the organisation degrade in order to justify further reductions.<sup>42</sup> This perception of a pernicious policy to deteriorate the TA to the point where it could then be restructured – but on the regular leadership's terms – gained traction with the TA's supporters in Parliament. This importance of ending its neglect as a rallying point for transforming the TA cannot be overstated: FR2020's impetus would come more from an increasingly vocal and politicised TA lobby, comprising prominent serving and veteran senior reservists, members of Parliament and government ministers. From its outset then, FR2020 innovation displayed both externally imposed and intra-service characteristics.

### **Policy Exchange Paves the Way?**

FR2020's watershed came in September 2010, when the Policy Exchange think-tank released a report designed to influence the rushed SDSR process. *Upgrading Our Armed Forces* – authored by former 22 SAS commander, Richard Williams, and former Director Special Forces, Graeme Lamb – stated that the MoD seemed 'to be a reluctant user of its reserve forces'.<sup>43</sup> They criticised the use of TA soldiers to individually backfill regular units on operations and argued that the TA's establishment should be doubled to 60,000. This was a direct response to the threat the Dannatt review posed to the TA. They drew attention to 'a tendency within the MoD to cut/limit their [reserve force] numbers or

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<sup>41</sup> 'Territorial Army ordered to halt training as pressure mounts on budgets', *The Daily Mail* (10 October 2009)

<sup>42</sup> Interview, regular officer, 9 September 2015.

<sup>43</sup> Lt Col. Richard Williams and Lt Gen Sir Graeme Lamb, *Upgrading Our Armed Forces* (London: Policy Exchange, 2010), 48

starve them of resources as a way of funding investment in the standing forces'. They also noted that a Reservist cost just one quarter to one fifth of a Regular. They, therefore, called for 'a strategic shift in the way that reservist and regular manpower is managed' in order to restructure the Reserves to face the demands of the forthcoming SDSR.<sup>44</sup>

Whilst Policy Exchange provided a coherent argument around which proponents of Reserve transformation coalesced, there is evidence that the political momentum to review the Reserves was growing before then. On 21 July 2010, during a Commons' Defence Select Committee session on the SDSR, Conservative backbencher Julian Brazier quizzed Defence Secretary Fox over whether or not the Reserves' cost effectiveness would be reviewed.<sup>45</sup> A former 21 SAS reservist, Brazier had extensive knowledge of the TA and had been its passionate advocate in Parliament for several decades. After the session, the Committee expressed disappointment that the MoD had failed to examine re-developing the Reserves. It recommended 'that the increased use of Reservists should be properly covered by the National Security Council (NSC) in its discussions'.<sup>46</sup> Within the austerity context, the perceived cheaper cost of reservists provided a key rationale for re-examining their role.

The first NSC meeting to decide details of the SDSR was to be chaired by Cameron on 28 September. Many of Williams' and Lamb's recommendations appeared in *The Times* on 15 September, when both men appeared before the Defence Select Committee, which was already predisposed to their recommendations. Two days later, reports detailed 'very strong tensions' in the MoD between ministers and the Army over

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<sup>44</sup> *Upgrading Our Armed Forces*, 47-53.

<sup>45</sup> House of Commons Defence Select Committee First Report, *The Strategic Defence and Security Review*, (London: TSO, September 2010) pp. 26-28.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

the TA.<sup>47</sup> Richards described these as a ‘classic inter-service battle’ in which ‘each service defended [their] respective turfs’.<sup>48</sup> With Richards promoted to CDS in October 2010, his successor, Peter Wall, also viewed the Regular-Reserve issue as a ‘zero-sum game’ of survival whereby either the Army or the TA would be worse off.<sup>49</sup> In post-Fordist terms, Dannatt, Richards and Wall all wanted to retain the Army’s ‘core’ capabilities and viewed the Reserves issue, as ‘not as important as perceived’ (i.e., as peripheral) by others.<sup>50</sup>

Although FR2020 gained cross-party support when unveiled, it is important to locate its ideological and political origins within the Conservative Party. Cameron’s alliance with the Liberal Democrats had left him open to criticism from the right of his party, which was reluctant to accept defence cuts. Similarly, Cameron’s relationship with Fox was fraught given that Fox had run in the 2005 Conservative leadership contest. As a senior figure on the party’s right with considerable backbench support, Fox had clashed with Cameron on numerous defence issues.<sup>51</sup> He was also being lobbied by pro-reserve Conservative MPs at this time. In September 2010, the threat of an alliance of Fox and right-wing backbenchers landing a political blow to Cameron over defence cuts was real.<sup>52</sup>

It is within this intra-party context that Williams’ and Lamb’s findings were backed by Brazier and David Davis, another former 21 SAS reservist. Both were backbenchers on the right of the party and TA champions. Both also distrusted the Army’s motives due to its record of chronic underinvestment in, and recent plans to cut, the TA.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> ‘Battle brews in Whitehall as Tory MPs push to increase the Territorial Army’, *The Times* (17 September 2010);

<sup>48</sup> General Sir David Richards, (2014) *Taking Command*, (London: Headline, 2014) p. 295; 297.

<sup>49</sup> Interview, Wall, 3 August 2015.

<sup>50</sup> Richard Dannatt comments at Global Strategy Forum, 14 July 2015.

<sup>51</sup> ‘On manoeuvres: Fox vs Cameron’, *The Financial Times* (29 September 2010)

<sup>52</sup> ‘Brexit: Cameron and Osborne are to blame for this sorry pass’, *The Financial Times* (24 June 2016)

<sup>53</sup> Interview, Davis.

They had the support of other prominent Tory backbenchers, including retired Army officer Bob Stewart, Julian Lewis, John Baron, and others. Inside the TA, this lobby could draw on the support of one of Britain's richest men and senior reserve officer, the Duke of Westminster, and prominent senior TA officers such as Brigadiers John Crackett, Ranald Munro, and Sam Evans, also anxious about the TA's organisational survival.<sup>54</sup> According to one former CGS, these were 'quite independent people, not short of going off on their own political tack... they want[ed] to be a part of the Army and part of a separate political axis, and it was a very powerful political axis'.<sup>55</sup> It is noteworthy that the Duke was later appointed as the first Deputy Commander Land Forces, while Brigadiers Munro and Crackett would eventually get promoted to major general and take up the two most senior Reservist posts. While Williams and Lamb appear to be military mavericks, as retired officers their advocacy for transforming the Reserves was done outside the constraints of the military chain of command and, thus as defence experts,<sup>56</sup> whereas the senior reservist personnel highlighted above took "their case outside the chain of command to highly placed civilians".<sup>57</sup> These serving officers with strong links to the organisation's political overseers represent Posen's archetype of military mavericks.<sup>58</sup> In Regular senior officers' views their links and lobbying dangerously blurred the Huntingtonian civil-military divide.<sup>59</sup> Yet, to politicians and senior Reservist officers, this was how one generated support for policies. Politicians and senior TA officers would maintain that the Army's leadership was also playing politics by attempting to cut the TA down to a size that would make it useless. These different views

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<sup>54</sup> Anonymous interview 18.

<sup>55</sup> Interview, Wall.

<sup>56</sup> Zisk (1993), p. 5.

<sup>57</sup> Rosen (1988), p. 139.

<sup>58</sup> Posen, (1984), pp. 174-175. See also: Rosen (1991), p. 11.

<sup>59</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The soldier and the state: the theory and politics of civil-military relations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985).

of each constituency's political motivations indicates how suspicious they had become of each other; the level of intra-service rivalry was evident.

While it is not clear if Brazier and Davis – or Policy Exchange – asked Williams to address the Reserves issue, the report was not drafted in a political vacuum. In the weeks prior to the SDSR's publication, Cameron intervened to stop the Army from cutting the TA.<sup>60</sup> At this time, media articles cautioned against cutting the TA, while a Whitehall source commented: 'The TA ... should have been restructured and cut before now, but a lot of them are well-connected and eloquent and they're very good at lobbying'.<sup>61</sup> When the SDSR was published in October 2010, it was obvious that Cameron's intervention, Tory backbench agitation, the TA's lobbying efforts, the Policy Exchange report, the Defence Committee's criticisms, and sympathetic media coverage had had an impact in bolstering the Reserves' prospects. It stated that a reserves review would be undertaken despite the Army facing major budget cuts and re-organisation.<sup>62</sup> This included restructuring it around a new 'Future Force 2020' (FF20) model, with a higher and lower readiness, brigade-based rotational force structure. FF20 followed post-Fordist principles, with core and periphery forces based around networked brigades, and within this a desire to outsource capabilities to reservists.

The intra-party political impetus for the inclusion of a Reserves review is suggested by Lamb's assertion that, 'the Policy Exchange pressure from Parliament and back benchers were the reasons why [Cameron] then looked at actions that were taking place within... the Army'.<sup>63</sup> According to Wall, despite the Regular Army's opposition, the 'reserve thing [was] politically imposed... Cameron had to concede to some parts of

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<sup>60</sup> 'Prime Minister appeals to military chiefs not to cut Territorial Army', *The Times* (10 October 2010);

<sup>61</sup> 'Vital Territory' *The Times* (11 October 2010)

<sup>62</sup> HM Government, *Securing Britain in an Age of Uncertainty: The Strategic Defence and Security Review*, (London; HMSO, 2010) pp. 15.

<sup>63</sup> Personal communication, Lamb, 1 June 2015.



the Tory backbench and the Reserves was a way of doing it'.<sup>64</sup> Other senior officers and a former defence minister have confirmed that FR2020's creation was motivated by intra-party political and ideological, rather than military/strategic, rationales.<sup>65</sup> These external, ideological and intra-party political drivers are crucial to understanding FR2020's subsequent evolution. They not only created tensions between Conservative backbenchers and ministers, and between government politicians and the Army, but also between senior officers in the TA and the Army, impacting FR2020's development at every stage. Most significantly, FR2020's political origins created dissonance between its vision for, and the reality of, organisational transformation.

### **An Independent Reserves Commission?**

Following the SDSR's publication, Cameron decided that an independent commission would be established to examine the Reserves. Lamb has recounted the ad hoc development of this policy decision:

So... then I got a call from [Cameron's] Chief of Staff, who said: "You're the only name that's come out of the hat who we'd trust to play this straight. But we're going to put a commission up, General [Nick] Houghton is going to be the serving [member], Julian Brazier is going to be the MP, and I'd like you to be in, and the Prime Minister is walking across to Parliament [to announce it], will you do it?"<sup>66</sup>

The quote reveals the degree to which the Reserves issue was politically contested even at this early stage. Not only was the Cameron's Chief of Staff involved in recruiting a member of an independent commission, he was also indicating the need to 'play it straight'. It provides further evidence of the deep tensions between senior Army officers on the one hand and politicians and senior TA officers on the other.

The inclusion in the commission of Brazier, the Reserves' most prominent political lobbyist; Lamb, whose views regarding the Reserves countered those leading the

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<sup>64</sup> Interview, Wall.

<sup>65</sup> Interview, Davis.

<sup>66</sup> Personal communication, Lamb, 1 June 2015.

Army; and Houghton, the next potential CDS, raises questions regarding the Commission's impartiality. Wall's opinion is that the review came under significant pressure, with the TA lobby 'banging this drum... in a sense coercing Houghton's Commission to agree bigger numbers... [and] slightly to political appetite, slightly to political order, [Houghton] said: "yeah they'll get to [the trained strength target of] 30,000 fine, it's a tiny proportion of the national workforce"". <sup>67</sup> This projection, however, would prove to be flawed.

When the Commission reported back to Parliament in July 2011 it confirmed that the reserves were in 'severe decline', and recommended a number of major organisational changes, with an emphasis on the TA, which it suggested be expanded from 19,000 to 30,000 by 2015, stressing the need to 'commit to returning formed sub-units to "the fight"'. <sup>68</sup> Other recommendations included the pairing of Regular and Reserve units, the TA's integration into the FF20 force structure, and a package of welfare and employment reforms designed to improve recruitment and retention. The TA was now in the political spotlight, and the stage had primarily been set by the intra-party dynamics within the Conservative Party, especially the alliance between TA-supporting Tory backbenchers on the right of the party and senior TA officers who had coalesced around the Policy Exchange report. Supporting Zisk's contention of the importance of building coalitions in implementing policy, <sup>69</sup> these actors combined to put substantial pressure on the Army into implementing a Reserves transformation programme that its leadership deemed peripheral.

### **Paired Fates: The Regular Army and FR2020**

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<sup>67</sup> Interview, Wall.

<sup>68</sup> Ministry of Defence *Future Reserves 2020 – The Independent Commission to Review the United Kingdom's Reserves*, (London: HMSO, 2011), 30, 26.

<sup>69</sup> Zisk (1993).

Faced with further reductions, after its own three-month review, in early July the MoD concluded that the SDSR ‘was not an affordable proposition’ and that the Army needed to be reduced from 102,000 to 82,000.<sup>70</sup> With reports of political friction between Cameron and Fox over the extent of the MoD cuts and amidst ‘considerable disquiet’ amongst senior Regular officers, on 15 July the Cabinet took the decision to cut Army manning and invest in the Reserves. This decision was influenced by the conclusion of the ‘three month review’ and the Independent Commission’s recommendations. Given the friction over defence cuts, combining both reports presented Fox – and by extension Cameron – with the opportunity for downsizing the Army whilst increasing reserve numbers. Taking both reports’ recommendations was politically expedient as it allowed both to quash Conservative backbencher and Labour criticism by presenting the reinvigoration of the TA as fair recompense for Army reductions. Both decisions were couched in the austerity language of reducing costs and increasing efficiencies. On 18 July, Fox briefed Parliament that the Army needed to be downsized and restructured, but stressed that reductions would be offset by a £1.5 billion investment in the Reserves. This would increase the TA’s trained strength from 19,000 to 30,000 by 2020.<sup>71</sup> Regular and Reserve numbers were presented to the CGS by the MoD Permanent Secretary without prior consultation.<sup>72</sup> Furthermore, according to Wall, by including 8,000 untrained reservists in his announcement, Fox was able to claim that:

The Army was the same size, just the composition was changing... which was an obfuscation and a deliberate lie... it wasn’t a surprise to any of us [in the Regular Army] that ... the government had sought to portray the increase in the Reserves as fair compensation for the reduction in the Regulars.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Interviews, Wall; Davis.

<sup>71</sup> Hansard, 18 July 2011, Column 644.

<sup>72</sup> House of Commons Defence Committee, *Future Army 2020* Ninth Report of Session 2013–14 (London: HMSO, 2014), p. 5.

<sup>73</sup> Interview, Wall.

Given such deep Army cuts, Wall believed that ‘the Reserve thing was politically-imposed’.<sup>74</sup> According to another general, Fox’s decision to blend both reports’ recommendations to create an integrated Regular-Reserve force structure, was ‘ad hoc’ and politically opportunistic.<sup>75</sup> The belief that FR2020 was ideologically motivated and politically opportunistic would shape its subsequent implementation.

From the outset, there were tensions between the presentation and reality of FR2020. With the FF20 plan now to be implemented with a much smaller regular component, the Army ‘quite quickly realised [it] needed to set up a design team that was outside the chain of command... that this wasn’t a “business as usual” proposition’.<sup>76</sup> In May 2011, then Lieutenant General Nick Carter began designing a new Army structure that would become known as Army2020. Army2020 was tested at each stage and designed to integrate the reserves. The TA’s inclusion represented an acknowledgment that reserves innovation would occur – that the politicians had won. Echoing post-Fordist principles, Army2020 divided the organisation into a high readiness ‘Reactive Force’ and a lower readiness ‘Adaptive Force’. It outlined a more prominent operational role for the TA in the Adaptive Force, which aimed ‘to deliver a genuinely useable and capable Reserve that is integrated with paired Regular units’.<sup>77</sup> This move increased the TA operational and training requirements. Furthermore, as the heaviest cuts to the Army fell on their logistics capability – units and equipment expensive to maintain in peacetime – Army2020 foresaw that this capability would be outsourced to the TA to save costs, which posed major challenges for the Reserves.

### **Failure to Adapt: Organisational Reality Bites**

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<sup>74</sup> Interview, Wall.

<sup>75</sup> Interview, Davis.

<sup>76</sup> Interview, Wall.

<sup>77</sup> MoD, *Transforming the British Army – An Update*, (London: MoD, 2013) pp. 4.

While the Army was now clear on its future structure, and where the Reserves fit into it, according to Wall, detailed Reserves development planning:

Was being handled much more by the [MoD] than the Army, because it was an externally proposed proposition that had never been fully tested with us... And there was no thought about ... how you would actually go about it.<sup>78</sup>

Richards has also detailed how ‘the motor for this project was Houghton’s team, operating largely outside the [Army] process’.<sup>79</sup> The fact that FR2020 planning happened without the testing that Army2020 had undergone, and partially outside the Army, underscores the level of distrust between senior Army officers and their political masters on the issue. This would cause further problems.

As FR2020 progressed, the difficult organisational reality of deploying Reserve sub-units with Regulars became clearer. Supporting Edmunds’ arguments about the increasing prominence of risk management in British civil-military relations, the training differential between regulars and reservists meant that the legal responsibility to ensure reservists were ‘accredited, regulated and subject to legislation’, underpinned any ability to deploy them.<sup>80</sup> Although cultural suspicion and institutional rivalry played a part, the Army argued that there were huge legal implications of deploying Reserve units to conflicts alongside Regulars without providing them similar levels of training. Integrated collective training, therefore, became central to sub-unit operational capability. Meanwhile, it became apparent that outsourcing logistics capability to Reserve units would require an immense re-organisation and would take much longer than the FR2020 timeline envisaged. Thus, the realities of reserve service constrained FR2020 from the outset, highlighting how the organisation struggled to adapt to meet FR2020’s demands.

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<sup>78</sup> Interview, Wall.

<sup>79</sup> Richards (2014), 299.

<sup>80</sup> *Reserves in the Future Force 2020* (2013), 22; Edmunds (2012).

When the FR2020 White Paper was published in July 2013, the drive for deployable sub-units had been diluted due to these organisational realities. Hammond stated that the Army, ‘while *continuing to deploy individuals*, will have a greater reliance on [reserve] formed sub-units and units’ (authors’ emphasis).<sup>81</sup> The reintroduction of individual backfilling was important as it lessened expectations that units would deploy, which had been a central feature of Reserve transformation discussions since 2010. It confirmed that the newly re-named TA, the Army Reserve (AR), could continue to contribute to operations as in the past. Routine Reserve deployment had been another FR2020 central tenet. Introducing it, Hammond stressed that, ‘the use of the Reserves is no longer exceptional or limited to times of imminent national danger or disaster, but is integral to delivering military effect in almost all situations’.<sup>82</sup> While the Commission had recommended pairing Regular and Reserve units, the November 2012 Green Paper had only mentioned it twice. Yet, pairing appeared in the White Paper 16 times. There clearly had been another change in emphasis. Our tracing of FR2020’s development reveals how the AR’s organisational realities caused the policy’s main objectives to be revised. The White Paper recognised that the deployment of formed sub-units hinged on close relationships and collective training with Regular units, which would take time to deliver. It highlighted that implementing FR2020 would not be as straightforward as envisaged by government.

### **The Politics of Numbers**

With a new role defined, the requirement to grow AR numbers gained centre-stage. Senior officers questioned the AR’s ability to recruit to strength, and politicians such as Brazier reported ‘horrificing’ problems with the recruitment system, which

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<sup>81</sup> Hansard 3 July 2013, Vol 565, Col. 924.

<sup>82</sup> *Reserves in the Future Force 2020* (2013), 7; Hansard 3 July 2013. Vol 565, Col. 924

following post-Fordist principles had been outsourced to management firm Capita.<sup>83</sup> Meanwhile, the scale of Army cuts, and the increasing reliance on the AR to deliver key capabilities, drew heavy media attention and, according to senior Army officers, obsessive Parliamentary scrutiny. By putting the AR at the centre of defence policy, FR2020 would remain a politically-sensitive issue for Cameron, with backbenchers, the Labour opposition and even Fox (following his resignation) later warning of the implications of cutting the Army before the AR could meet its recruitment targets.<sup>84</sup> By linking Army2020 and FR2020, the success of the entire Army transformation now hinged on AR recruitment. According to Fox, it was becoming ‘a numbers game... and we’d taken an enormous gamble with [those] numbers’.<sup>85</sup> Richards also notes that Houghton had outlined to the NSC that FR2020 needed testing to prove its practicability, but that ‘the government decided to push it through without this sensible precaution’.<sup>86</sup> This echoes Wall’s opinion that the Reserves’ expansion was ‘not grounded in military experience, military fact, or any credible evidence... it was a finger in the wind thing’ exercise and Dannatt’s viewpoint that it ‘was based on hope rather than any science’.<sup>87</sup> Thus, the intensely political nature of FR2020 and subsequent intra-service rivalry ensured it continued to be an externally-driven process, which the Army did not fully support.

Cameron’s hope that the White Paper would settle the Reserves issue was frustrated. Within a month of its publication – and despite a £3 million investment in a new recruitment campaign – leaked Army reports highlighted that the AR’s strength had dropped 5% and that recruitment was 50% below target. The outsourcing of the AR’s localised recruitment system remained under sustained attack, with Brazier leading the

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<sup>83</sup> ‘New Model Army’, *The Times* (19 February 2013)

<sup>84</sup> Hansard, 8 November 2012, Cols 1025-1034.

<sup>85</sup> Interview, Liam Fox MP, 28 May 2015.

<sup>86</sup> Richards (2014), pp. 299.

<sup>87</sup> Interview, Wall.

criticism. Rumours abounded that the Army wanted FR2020 to fail. A regular officer involved with Army2020 planning confirmed that elements in the Army did want the plan to collapse, believing that if it failed the political will for cutting the Regulars would evaporate.<sup>88</sup> The fact that Army reports detailing reserve recruitment problems were leaked to the media supports this assertion.<sup>89</sup> FR2020 was becoming an intra-service struggle for survival.

As 2013 progressed, the media recognised that the cornerstone of the government's defence policy was failing and fixated on AR recruitment, routinely reporting personnel statistics. Matters climaxed in mid-November when former Army officer John Baron tabled a bill in Parliament calling for a delay to Army cuts until the AR met its targets. Reflecting deep divisions within the Conservatives over FR2020, Baron's bill received the support of 22 Tory rebel MPs and most of the opposition. With the forthcoming vote attracting media attention, Hammond stressed that any delay implementing FR2020 would 'make the whole agenda into a political football'.<sup>90</sup> Yet, the night before the vote Hammond met with Brazier – who at this stage favoured Baron's position – in a bid to defuse the situation. In this meeting Brazier demanded an annual external audit of FR2020 in return for his support for Hammond, which the latter acceded to.<sup>91</sup> It is unclear if Brazier was promised the new Minister of Reserves post at this meeting, but it is significant that within months of stating his support of FR2020 he had been appointed to the position. Whatever the political rationale for Brazier's appointment, once he became responsible for FR2020 he became far more supportive of it.

The Tory rebellion highlighted FR2020's mounting political costs. During the following year, intense scrutiny on recruitment continued as numbers faltered. In 2014,

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<sup>88</sup> Personal communication, former Regular Army officer, 19 August 2015.

<sup>89</sup> 'Reforms have left the Army in chaos', *The Daily Telegraph* (16 October 2013).

<sup>90</sup> 'Army Reserve rebellion in prospect among Tory MPs', *BBC News* (20 November 2013)

<sup>91</sup> 'Hammond gives ground to rebels before crunch Army vote', *The Times* (20 November 2013)



the Defence Select Committee raised concerns over the ability of the AR to meet its targets, as did the National Audit Office (NAO), the Major Projects Authority (MPA) and the External Scrutiny Team (EST).<sup>92</sup> In September, the Public Accounts Committee echoed the NAO's concerns, concluding:

It is astonishing that the [MoD] went ahead with plans to cut back the regular Army by 20,000 and increase the number of Reservists without testing whether this was doable and without properly consulting the Army itself.<sup>93</sup>

With both Cameron's and Hammond's political capital invested in FR2020, questions in Parliament on the transparency of, and delays in, publishing recruitment data resulted in growing political scrutiny. A further unsuccessful recruitment drive took place in July 2014, and the subsequent relaxation of the upper age limit caused derision of the AR as a 'Dad's Army' and criticism of FR2020's cost effectiveness.<sup>94</sup> At this point, Cameron and Hammond detected that the political risk surrounding FR2020 was not diminishing and 'let it go'.<sup>95</sup> By July 2014 Brazier had been appointed Reserves Minister and Michael Fallon Defence Secretary. One of Fallon's first moves was to change the criteria for which military posts counted as AR service, immediately adding 750 personnel to its trained strength. This statistical sleight of hand provided him with 'evidence' of progress toward the 30,000 target.

### **Revision and the War Fighting Division**

With the political heavyweights divested of FR2020, the numbers game contributed to the beginning of its re-assessment. The first indication of a policy shift came in October 2014, when recently appointed CGS Carter appeared to undermine FR2020's whole rationale, stating that, 'a Reserve is what it sounds like; it's there for worst-case...The sense that there is an obligation to be routinely and regularly used is not how we see this

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<sup>92</sup> National Audit Office, *Report on Army2020*, 6.

<sup>93</sup> Public Accounts Committee, *Report on Army2020*, (5 September 2014).

<sup>94</sup> 'Dad's Army: MoD ready to call up the over-50s', *The Times* (14 November 2014)

<sup>95</sup> Interview, Wall.

being used.’<sup>96</sup> Carter’s assertion that the AR would only be employed for national emergencies contradicted Fox’s, the White Paper’s, and Hammond’s position that the AR would be used ‘routinely’ to do tasks that were once the ‘exclusive domain of the Regulars’.<sup>97</sup> It highlighted the dissonance between FR2020’s political origins and the AR’s organisational realities.

Aware of the recruitment challenges, Carter highlighted the difficulty of maintaining a balance in the ‘equilateral triangle between [the reservist’s] employer, his family and himself. What you have to do is explain it’s here for worst case – and keep that triangle absolutely in balance’.<sup>98</sup> This comment provides a clue as to why Carter was backing away from a more operational role for the Reserves. With recruitment figures about to be revealed as ‘shocking’, and many of Britain’s larger employers worried that FR2020 would increase the demands on reservists, Carter’s reappraisal was aimed at both employers and at attracting more recruits. Carter hinted this by stating that there would be a ‘refinement’ in the message to emphasise that service would not impinge too heavily on civilian life.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, following post-Fordist principles, the Army also began the cost-saving process of closing smaller AR locations and centralising units in larger bases, with detrimental effects for recruitment and retention.

There were also other factors at play. As the new CGS, Carter was untainted by the past battles over Army cuts and FR2020, and as Army2020’s chief architect, he came with his own political capital. The heavy criticism of the recruitment failures in the media and Parliament gave him the opportunity for changing policy. As Cameron and Hammond had divested their political capital – leaving Brazier to oversee FR2020 – there was less

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<sup>96</sup> ‘Reservists are no replacement for regular troops, head of Army says’, *The Daily Telegraph* (28 October 2014)

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> BBC Radio World at One Programme (28 October 2014)

interest in Carter's decision to recalibrate the AR's role. In February 2015 Carter restated that, 'the obligation if you join [the AR] is for training only... we are not going to use it regularly and routinely [two central tenets of FR2020], as perhaps was suggested a couple of years ago. Rather, it is there in the event of a national emergency'.<sup>100</sup> At first glance, this *volte face* represented a reversal of the AR role as outlined in FR2020. Carter appeared to be saying that AR would be used like the TA: as a strategic reserve. This, of course, undermined the two central tenets of FR2020.

Nevertheless, the reality is rather more nuanced, and the 2015 SDSR is crucial to understanding Carter's position. The 2015 NSS and SDSR differed markedly from their predecessors. Crucially, the strategic threat from international near-peer conflict was re-prioritised, thus, requiring organisational changes. The SDSR stated that the Army would be expected to deploy a 'war-fighting division optimised for high intensity combat operations' rather than the contingency brigade structure outlined in Army2020.<sup>101</sup> To Carter, this strategic re-orientation enabled the Army to change its planning assumptions. The SDSR's focus on the quickly-deployable warfighting division meant that the Regulars would provide the majority of its forces. This had major implications for the Army2020 structure and FR2020, which were reassessed as part of the 'Army2020 Refine' project.<sup>102</sup>

However, the 2015 SDSR's and Army2020 Refine's focus on the warfighting division, whilst strategically justifiable, can also be viewed as an opportunistic solution to the frictions FR2020 created with its emphasis on routinely deployed reserve units. The Army leadership's ability to do this was enabled by its awareness of the decreased political attention on FR2020. It was justified by the organisational challenges

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<sup>100</sup> General Sir Nick Carter, Chatham House speech, 17 February 2015.

<sup>101</sup> *National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review*, 29.

<sup>102</sup> Strategic Defence and Security Review - Army: Written statement - HCWS367, Hansard, 15 December 2016.

experienced, the changing strategic environment, and supported by changes in the AR narrative. By January 2018, the AR's trained strength had improved to 27,070, but this figure had been reached by the decision in November 2016 to include over 2,000 Phase 1-trained reservists for the first time.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, in 2017 outflow increased to almost the same level as inflow, indicating future personnel problems. Consequently, criticism of the reduction in the Army's size has continued after it emerged that it had reduced below its 82,000 target three years faster than anticipated. Both the EST and the MPA remain very cautious about FR2020's ability to deliver a fully trained AR by April 2019.<sup>104</sup> With the Army cuts complete, but the AR still under-recruited, the sustainability of Army2020 Refine, especially the AR's contribution, remains in question.

This is unsurprising given past attempts to transform the Reserves. Whilst FR2020 has shown some progress in terms of better equipment provision, improved integration of Reserve and Regular units, better availability of courses for reservists, integrated collective training remains a challenge. Indeed, a recent EST report highlighted that 'the integration of Regular and Reserve components is incomplete and will probably remain so until such time that it has been inculcated through [even greater] routine education, training and activity'.<sup>105</sup> Given the questions it raises about training and risk in deploying AR units, the routine deployment of reserve units appears uncertain since the 2015 SDSR.

### **Conclusion: An ideological, intra-party, intra-service driven innovation**

The ideological rationale of decreased state spending, and intra-party Regular-Reserve politics, not strategy, were the primary drivers of FR2020. These ideological motives, originated from the Conservative Party backbench and related to Cameron's weak position, were driven by the latter's desire to placate these elements and strengthen his

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<sup>103</sup> UK Armed Forces Quarterly Personnel Report (January 2018).

<sup>104</sup> 'Redundant troops rehired as army marches into "chaos"', *The Sunday Times* (9 August 2015).

<sup>105</sup> *Reserve Forces External Scrutiny Team Report 2017* (London: The Council of RFCAs, 2017), p. 25.

control over his nascent government. These motives fused the political goal of reinvigorating the Reserves with financial arguments about the need for cheaper forces. Intra-party politics and the Conservatives' cost-cutting ideology drove the development of an opportunistic FR2020 plan that was portrayed as fair recompense for the drastic Army cuts. This opportunism caused FR2020 to develop in an untested manner that caused severe organisational frictions. Most controversially, these manifested in the inability to recruit the numbers required to expand the AR and, thus, its failure to meet its newly defined role.

These politically expedient decisions to transform the Reserves echo Kier, who has argued that 'civilian policymakers endorse certain military policies that they believe will ensure the maintenance of the preferred *domestic* distribution of power' (original emphasis).<sup>106</sup> As shown, Cameron's concerns over the power balance within his own party led him to initiate FR2020. Therefore, this study contributes a more nuanced intra-party political understanding of the external origins of military innovation. In relation to Rosen's argument that conflict between combat arms drives innovation, we have provided evidence of how this can also happen between service components, and how, within the climate of austerity, conflicts over resourcing, especially relating to funding and personnel numbers, influenced the way in which the Army leadership responded to FR2020 with a zero-sum game mentality.<sup>107</sup> Intra-service rivalry, combined with a lack of policy coherence, undermined FR2020 from the outset.

Complementing Foley et al.,<sup>108</sup> our research has highlighted how different innovation dynamics identified in the literature can be operant at different stages of the

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<sup>106</sup> Kier (1997), p. 140.

<sup>108</sup> Foley, Griffin and McCartney (2011).

process. As Zisk argues, the process of alliance-building between interest groups within the military organisation, and supportive civilian leaders and defence policy experts can lead to innovation that benefits such groups.<sup>109</sup> As explored in this article, the coalition between zealous TA-supporting Tory backbenchers and serving senior TA officers, and the Policy Exchange report's recommendations, led Cameron to initiate the augmentation and transformation of the Reserves. However, as we have shown, whilst intra-party politics can initially drive innovation as intra-service rivalry and organisational difficulties adapting curtail it later, the political will to carry through to completion AR transformation waned. It was an awareness of the weakening political appetite for FR2020, aided by the changed strategic emphasis of the 2015 SDSR, that allowed the Army to re-focus its 'core business' on the warfighting division and extricate itself from FR2020's most challenging aspects. The Army leadership's retreat from the routine deployment of formed AR units undermined FR2020's two central tenets. If ideology and intra-party politics initially drove FR2020, and intra-service rivalry stifled it, organisational difficulties adapting, and the changed political and strategic context provided the Army an escape route from what it viewed as an unworkable plan. Thus, supporting Farrell et al.'s wider arguments on the drivers of innovation, different innovation dynamics impacted FR2020 at different stages of its implementation.<sup>110</sup>

It is also clear from our analysis that post-Fordist principles shaped the transformations of the Army and the AR. Army2020's delineation of reactive and adaptive forces, and within this a reliance on the cheaper AR, imitated the core/periphery approach of private industry. This was complemented by the outsourcing of both logistics capability to the AR and recruitment to business, and a centralisation of AR unit locations and equipment to save costs. Post-Fordist organisational principles provided the Army

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<sup>109</sup> Zisk (1993).

<sup>110</sup> Farrell, Rynning, and Terriff (2013).

with solutions to address ideologically-imposed cuts, but also created organisational challenges for the AR. However, Army2020's placing of core and periphery forces on tiered readiness cycles, and Army2020 Refine's emphasis on the warfighting division also had clear political benefits for the Army. By locking units into a deployment, recovery and training cycle, it becomes more difficult to reduce the Army any further without threatening the coherence of the system.

Thus, Army2020, and Refine, can be viewed as the Army's insurance against further defence cuts. They are not only a solution to growing financial and strategic pressures, but also a buffer against politicians' desires, and ability, to further cut the Army. Such a political view of British force structure is perhaps even more applicable to FR2020, with its attempt to integrate sub-units into the Army's readiness cycle. At a considerable political and economic cost, FR2020 has all but guaranteed the AR's survival. Indeed, FR2020's primary aim – that of reinvigorating the Reserves – has arguably already been met. Nonetheless, with the AR continuing to suffer ongoing recruitment and retention challenges and the retreat from routine deployments, it remains doubtful that FR2020 will deliver the military capability it originally envisaged. This fact alone underscores the most important drivers of this partial military innovation: politics, ideology and finance rather than military necessity.